

From: Kasman, Mark [Kasman.Mark@epa.gov]
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To: OITA-EVERYONE [OITAEVERYONE@epa.gov]
Subject: OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (OIA) WEEKLY REPORT: December 17, 2020, - January 6, 2021

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

December 17, 2020 – January 6, 2021



ADMINISTRATOR WHEELER EXTENDS IEP WITH TAIWAN FOREIGN MINISTER WU

Administrator Andrew Wheeler and Taiwan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joseph Wu committed to extending the International Environmental Partnership (IEP) between EPA and Taiwan, through the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO). They also agreed to support a new Indo-Pacific Marine Litter Initiative with Taiwan's Oceans Affairs Council and Environmental Protection Administration. Minister Wu complimented EPA's engagement with Taiwan on marine litter, children's health, and air quality. Administrator Wheeler noted that we have long bipartisan support for cooperating with Taiwan on each of these issues and several more. Staff from EPA and the appropriate organizations in Taiwan will work together in the new year to finalize the Indo-Pacific Marine Litter Initiative. [Ferrante, Harris, Lee]

U.S. NATIONAL DIALOGUES ON FOOD SYSTEMS FACILITATOR TRAINING

OITA PDAA Jane Nishida attended a preparatory meeting hosted by the organizers of the upcoming U.S. National Dialogue on Food Systems where PDAA Nishida will facilitate a session on prevention of food waste. The first of the three US National Dialogues is scheduled for January 13th to prepare the US government for 2021 UN Food Systems Summit which will take place on the margins of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September. These dialogues are designed to obtain stakeholder input on US food systems challenges, solutions, and paths forward and will seek input from high-level subject matter experts/scientists. The Dialogue will cover each of the five UN Food System Summit Action Tracks. The second US National Dialogue is planned for March 31 and the third for May 26. [Finman, Huber, Chang, Torney]

NADB U.S. FEDERAL BOARD MEMBERS APPROVE A PETROS PROPERTY-ASSESSED CLEAN ENERGY (PACE) PROJECT FOR THE U.S. – MEXICO BORDER REGION

On December 18, 2020, the U.S. Federal Board members approved certification of up to an \$80 million loan for the Petros Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing program in the U.S. – Mexico border region. The

Petros PACE project promotes the implementation of qualified energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation and resiliency elements in non-residential properties, such as commercial, industrial, mixed-use and agricultural facilities, through available local PACE programs. The project will be implemented within the 100-kilometer (62.5 mile) border region of the United States in cities and counties with PACE approved legislation. The project is expected to generate environmental and human health benefits related to the implementation of renewable energy, energy efficiency, water conservation and resiliency components supported by a local PACE program (“subprojects”) by reducing demand for fossil-fuel-based energy sources and/or water sources and thus contributing to the displacement of harmful emissions and improved water management. [Almodovar, Jordan] PACE programs are created through state legislation and instituted by local ordinances, which establish the eligible property investments of the program and a method for repayment through property tax collection. [Jordan, Almodovar]

BAHRAIN CAPACITY-BUILDING REQUEST ON ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND ENFORCEMENT

The Kingdom of Bahrain’s Ministry of Interior (MOI) representative at their Embassy in Washington, D.C., reached out to OIA to discuss their interest in collaboration around establishing environmental laws and enforcement procedures with respect to a new environmental police unit that is being established under MOI. An EPA follow-up discussion with MOI is planned in the coming weeks to discuss this request further. [Mercurio]

VIETNAM PASSES REVISED AND STRENGTHENED LAW ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Following two years of meticulous revisions, the Vietnam National Assembly finally passed an amended Environmental Protection Law in November 2020, the third time since the law was enacted in 1993. The latest revisions overhaul the weaknesses of the 2014 amendments and introduces a more comprehensive approach to environmental protection and management. The revised law has 16 chapters with 141 articles and clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of different ministries and stakeholders involved in environmental protection as well as unifying scattered responsibilities to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), which should improve overall management and implementation of the law. Another important breakthrough of the law is the inclusion of residential communities as an entity in environmental protection for the first time, which allows for greater public participation in protecting the environment. Over the years EPA has worked closely with MONRE on strengthening environmental governance and having technical exchanges on environmental impact assessments, technology-based control strategies and permitting topics. [Chen]

LEAD PAINT LAW IN VIETNAM FINALIZED AND PROGRESS GLOBALLY

The efforts of the Lead Paint Alliance continue to see results across the globe as it aims to eliminate lead-based paints. In December, Vietnam passed a National Technical Standard on lead paint establishing a phased in limit on lead in most paints of 600 ppm (effective in December 2020) and 90 ppm (effective 2025), the latter limit would put Vietnam on par with US regulatory levels. Nigeria’s executive branch has approved a lead paint regulation in December, which is now awaiting legislative approval by their Congress. Ukraine is in the final phases of finalizing a lead paint law as evidenced by having invited comments on their law in January. [Bandemehr]

14TH ARCTIC PROJECT COMMITTEE MEETING (PCOM)

OITA staff represented the USG at the virtual 14th meeting of the Arctic Council’s (AC) funding mechanism, the Project Support Instrument (PSI), to review progress on several AC projects and exchange views on new funding requests. During the formal PCOM session, the PSI Committee approved several projects including work on: solid waste management in the remote arctic; mercury risk assessments; and an indigenous community project on black carbon and health. In addition, a new project to assess and demonstrate alternatives fluorinated Aqueous Film-Forming Foams (AFFF) was approved. The PSI Committee expressed gratitude to Russia for their Chairmanship of 2020 and welcomed Sweden’s Chairmanship for 2021. Preliminary dates for the next two PSI Committee Meetings are March 15 and October 26, 2021. [Finman, Huber, Torney]

CONGRESS DEFINES CIRCULAR ECONOMY

On Friday, December 18th President Trump signed the [Save Our Seas 2.0 Act](#) into law. The law focuses on actions to address marine litter and includes sections that address U.S. policy on international cooperation to combat marine debris. The act defines circular economy as “an economy that uses a systems-focused approach and involves industrial processes and economic activities that—(A) are restorative or regenerative by design; (B) enable resources used in such processes and activities to maintain their highest values for as long as possible; and (C) aim for the elimination of waste through the superior design of materials, products, and systems (including business models)” and promotes usage of this approach. The phrase ‘circular economy’ has long been opposed by the US government in international meetings and OITA is in discussions with EPA, State Department and others on potential implications for future US policy positions. [Besch, Sims, Torney, Horan, Finman]

CFC REMINDER

Thanks to all who have contributed so far to this year’s CFC Campaign. OITA surpassed our goal of \$12,000 by raising a total of \$14,991 with over a week to go! The latest CFC agency updates reported a significant increase surpassing EPA’s overall goal of \$1 million with a total of \$1.147 million. The total is broken down in this [report](#). If you are still considering contributing to CFC but have not had a chance to contribute yet, please do so before January 15th when the Campaign ends. The *Cause of the Week* is Animal Welfare which you can read about [here](#). [Adrian, Revilla]

Website Statistics – International Cooperation Microsite

Please find below website statistics from the International Cooperation website and social media statistics from the @EPAAllNations twitter account for December 2020. [Marzouk]

December 2020 Summary:

- Total pageviews: 32,580
- Total sessions: 24,157
- Total users: 19,587
- Average pageviews per day: 1050
- Avg time spent on individual page: 4:40
- Countries of visitors: 181

Top 20 pages:

1. POPs
2. EPA’s Role with UNEP
3. E-waste (main)*
4. Mercury Emissions - Global Context
5. Protecting the Marine Environment*
6. PPG - Introduction to Public Participation*
7. ASGM without mercury
8. Minamata Convention on Mercury*
9. EPA Collaboration with Canada*
10. International Cooperation (home page)
11. PPG – Public Meetings
12. PPG - Process Planning
13. Where EPA Works Around the World
14. Reducing Mercury Pollution from ASGM
15. PPG – Selecting the Right Level
16. Air Pollution from International Transportation
17. PPG – Tools to Inform the Public
18. Transboundary Air Pollution
19. EPA’s Role in the North American CEC
20. IEMN

Top countries of site users:

21. United States

22. India
23. Philippines
24. Canada
25. United Kingdom
26. Malaysia
27. Pakistan
28. South Africa
29. China
30. Kenya
31. Australia
32. Hong Kong
33. [not set]
34. Singapore
35. Bangladesh
36. Germany
37. Zimbabwe
38. Nepal
39. Indonesia
40. Japan

EPAAllNations Twitter Summary

- Tweets sent: 25
- Impressions (views): 36,504
- Engagements (clicks): 179
 - Retweets: 17
 - Replies: 1
 - Likes: 24
 - Profile clicks: 10
 - Link clicks: 7
 - Hashtag clicks: 2
 - Expands: 73
 - Media views: 45
- Followers: 2058 (+10)

Most viewed tweet:

As we close our #EPAat50 anniversary celebration, EPA is proud of the 50 years of environmental progress achieved in partnership w/ tribes. We remain committed to working to ensure tribal communities have access to clean & safe water, air & land for the next 50 yrs. #TribesandEPA <https://t.co/5RgsHDmHn2> (December 10)

Upcoming Events

Administrator's Mission to Costa Rica: Administrator Wheeler will travel to Costa Rica to advance bilateral collaboration with Costa Rica. January 6-10

ACAP Heads of Delegation Meeting: January 11, virtual

1st US National Dialogue on Food Systems: January 13, virtual

1st G7 Senior Environment Officials Meeting: January 27-28, virtual

5th Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5): February 22-26, virtual

Step E-Waste Meeting: February 2021, virtual

OECD Environmental Policy Committee Meeting (EPOC), February 10-12, virtual

Mark S. Kasman
Director, Office of International Affairs
Office of International and Tribal Affairs
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460
TEL: 202-564-2024 FAX: 202-565-2412